



EXCLUSIVE!

"FAT GEMMA IS HISTORY!"

TOWIE's Gemma tells Star all about her plans to slim down



Gemma Collins won herself a legion of fans on *The Only Way Is Essex* with her larger-than-life personality – not to mention her eternal quest to snare Mick Norcross. But her 17 stone, size-20 curves have been a non-stop talking point, and viewers felt Gemma's pain when the nightclub owner rejected her for smaller cast members, like Chloe Sims. So we have given Gemma her toughest challenge yet – to drop four dress sizes and slim to a size 12 with the help of our diet and exercise gurus. But before the fat-fighting can begin, we need a photo shoot and weigh-in, as well as a chat with the 30 year old to see how she really feels about her weight. And we soon discover that beneath the bubbly personality is a very determined person. "Get those doughnuts away from me!" laughs Gemma as she enters our studio and spots a box of Krispy Kremes. Clearly the car saleswoman has got her diet head on. "One of those would be an hour in the gym!" So with the doughnuts safely tucked away out of

Gemma's sight, we sit down to grill her on the monumental weight-loss task she has ahead of her. We want to know the secrets behind her new diet and fitness regime – and, of course, what she plans to do when "Fat Gemma" is finally a thing of the past...
How was the photo shoot? "I'm actually a very confident person. I don't think people understand it, but I don't mind wearing a bikini. Why shouldn't I show you my fat bits?"
You said before that you were happy being a size 20. So why do you want to do this diet for us now? "I feel happy, confident and sexy as a size 20, which is why I'm happy to get my kit off here, but that's not being responsible for myself. Talking about my health has bloody scared the life out of me. I don't want to end up with Type 2 diabetes. I don't want to die young. I've got a lot to live for."
Are you worried that people will think you are hypocritical for saying you loved being big now that you are dieting? "No. I want to keep my curves but be healthy. In an ideal world, I want to marry Mick and have his babies, but I'm

not healthy enough to have kids at the minute."
You weren't always this size. Why did you put on so much weight? "I was a size 12 about six years ago. And I didn't ever think about food or what I was eating. But when I broke up with Dan, my boyfriend of five years, I turned to food. Food is my emotional crutch."
Why was the break-up so hard for you? "We were having a baby together, lived in a beautiful house and had a lovely life – all my dreams had come true. But then he decided he didn't want it any more. In my opinion, the stress of it all caused me to have a miscarriage. I was so hurt. To this day, I still think of it all the time. I just never got closure on it."
That's when you started putting on weight? "Well, in Essex everyone knows your business, so I just kept off the scene. I was so depressed. I would listen to sad songs and stuff my face with a Chinese, then get into bed and pull the covers over my head and cry. I lived to eat. I needed someone's arms around me, so I started a love affair with food."
"I would get up and have

a bacon sandwich and a pizza, then a cake in the afternoon and an Indian takeaway for dinner, plus loads of chocolate. I gave up exercising because my self-esteem was at rock bottom. The only way to make myself feel better was to eat."
"I hate it when people just assume: 'She's fat because she's greedy and eats too much.' It's not always the case. Unfortunately, food is my weakness. When I'm stressed, the first thing I do is eat."
And when did you realise you had gained weight? "I looked in the mirror and thought: 'You're not Gemma anymore.' I've had to learn to be comfortable with who I've become. People who know me never took that much notice of the weight. I've grown into Gemma the 17-stone person."
Do you feel guilty when you overeat? "Yes. Especially if I watch things like *Comic Relief*, where people are starving."
How do you feel about losing the weight? "A lot of this weight is emotional. As I'm losing it, I'm going to be shedding all the emotional turmoil that I've eaten my way through. I'm scared about being a raw person – my weight is my

protection. So it's going to be very interesting to see who I am at the end of it all."
Have you tried to slim down before? "I joined Slimming World, but my mindset wasn't right. I lost a stone, but then it just went straight back on again."
Have you tried any extreme diets? "I've tried the Cambridge diet, but I'd have the milkshake for breakfast and then a Big Mac for lunch. But this diet is not a fad, it's life-changing for me."
Slimming pills? "No. I was offered them but they give you diarrhoea."
So, you're going to lose the weight healthily this time. "Yes. I've got my diet plan and a personal trainer. He's teaching me not to load my plate up like a mountain. I do everything to excess – food, bronzer, everything... It's going to be challenging to put the brakes on."
What's going to be the hardest thing to give up? "Thick white bread."
You've had your first personal-training session now. How did you find it? "Painful! Absolute hell. I was puffing and sweating, but it's not that intense at this stage

because I don't want to have a bloody heart attack! Of course, I'd rather be tucking into a nice bit of dinner, but I'm just thinking about the end result."
And you're going to bootcamp? "Yes, I'm going to The No.1 Boot Camp, in Norfolk. On the drive up, I'm going to cry! I'm a homely girl and I'll be out of my comfort zone."
Are you scared of 5am runs? "No, I love a challenge! I want to run a marathon next year for charity. That's my goal."
Are you going to sneak in any chocolate? "No, I've cheated my body by stuffing it with Big Macs and cakes for long enough."
What size would you like to be in the end? "I'm a size 20. I would like to get down to a 14 or 12. I'll stop when I look good like Marilyn Monroe or Anna Nicole Smith." ▶

Whose body from *The Only Way Is Essex* do you envy?

"Amy Childs, because she's not stick thin and has curves in the right places."

Did it upset you being around the skinny girls on the show?

"No. They have fantastic bodies but I don't feel inferior. I've seen pictures of us all and thought: 'Bloody hell, Gem, cool it on the takeaways!' But I'm a positive person."

Are people nasty about your weight?

"There have been some horrible comments and if I wasn't a strong person, I'd kill myself! Everyone is entitled to an opinion, but calm yourselves down, people – I'm doing something about it!"

Do you think you're single because you're overweight?

"Yeah, there have been weak moments when I've thought that. People in clubs will say: 'Oh, you've got a lovely face.' It pisses me off. But blokes have to take me as I am, or they aren't worthy of my time. I do get chatted up but, maybe when I'm slim I'll be inundated with offers. They'll be saying: 'She's a right goer!'"

Do you think Mick will fancy you if you slim down?

"Well, we've been flirting for some time and have had a little

snog. But his life has changed so much. He was a married family man and he's getting more attention than ever now. He doesn't want to settle into another relationship, but he says he's looking for a girl-next-door – and that's me."

And has anything happened since you kissed?

"We are going on a date but I'm worried about eating out on this diet, so I'm not sure if a restaurant is a good idea."

How do you think he'll react when you reach your goal?

"My dream is to rock up at Sugar Hut in leathers and hear Mick say: 'Who is that girl?' Then I'll take my helmet off and say: 'Mick, it's me!'"

Did it bother you when we recently ran unflattering photos of you working out?

"Well, I wouldn't get my body out here today if I didn't feel comfortable. Not everybody is a size 8."

Do you think you will be happier when you're slim?

"I don't know. I'll tell you when I get there! I'll either feel good or say: 'Bloody hell, take me for a Chinese!'"

Do you feel nervous?

"There is a massive long journey ahead, so I am nervous. Every day will be a battle for me, but there is no girl out there who doesn't struggle with her weight."

What are you most looking forward to about being slim?

"All I want to be able to do is go into French Connection and buy clothes without crying, because I can't get into their stuff."

What clothes would you like to wear?

"I can't wait to strut into the Ocean Club in Marbella in my bikini. I want to be curvy but without the blubber hanging over."

Do you still have your size 12 clothes?

"I've got dresses that I haven't thrown away from Oasis and Miss Selfridge. I cling on to them because they're the girl I was. I'd like to get back into them."

Do you find it hard to buy clothes?

"It's an absolute nightmare. I get suicidally depressed in changing rooms. Bigger girls are outcasts in society. I shop at Dorothy Perkins and Evans, and that's it. I don't look forward to shopping because I can't get the clothes I want. Just because we're bigger doesn't mean we want to look like dogs!"

How do you feel when you can't get clothes to fit?

"If I'm invited to something, I think: 'Shit, what am I going to wear?' My mum is big and she cries when she's trying to find an outfit. No one should feel like that. If it doesn't fit, I'll just walk out and think: 'Sod it, I'll have a cake instead.'"

Is your whole family big?

"Mum is big but my dad and brother are stick thin. They love me but say: 'Gemma, you were beautiful before. You had the face and the body.' So they're all behind me with this."

Are you scared about losing the excess weight?

"Yes, sometimes I worry I'll be a different person at the end of it. But there is more fizz in me than a bottle of champagne, so I think I'll still be bubbly Gemma! If I start really loving myself, that would be a bit boring."

Do you think you have the willpower to do it?

"Yes – it's not going to be easy, but I will do it." ■



PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA DENIMA. ART DIRECTION: CHRISTOPHER MORRIS. STYLING: SAULINE AT DERBYMARKS. MAKEUP BY EVANIS. GEMMA IS TRAINING AT VIRGIN ACTIVE, CHELSEA AND MOLL BOOTS CAMP (WWW.MOLLBOOTS.COM/UK)

Kelly Allen

Keep reading Star to find out how Gemma does!

Gemma's daily diet before

Breakfast: Bacon sandwich. **Lunch:** Baked potato, cheese and coleslaw. **Dinner:** An Indian takeaway. **Snacks:** Maltasers, Minstrels and a Twix. **Drinks:** Champagne, fizzy drinks.

What she'll eat now

Breakfast: Poached eggs with gluten-free oatcakes. **Lunch:** Grilled chicken with salad. **Dinner:** Grilled beefburger with grilled vegetables. **Snacks:** Handful of nuts or seeds, apple slices. **Drinks:** Green tea, fruit tea, water, no alcohol.

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Gemma used to be a svelte size 12